

Family files suit against priest, claiming abuse

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The Rev. Myles Patrick White was like a "Pied Piper" to the boys who attended St. Isaac Jogues Catholic Church in Hinsdale during the late 1960s, the father of one of the boys says.

They would accompany him on trips to local restaurants for pizza or on outings to Chicago for a movie. Occasionally, he would take them skiing in the Rockies, the boy's father said.

So, two decades later, when his son approached him with allegations that Father White had sexually molested him as a boy, the boy's father refused to believe it.

After all, White had been a family friend for years; he was trusted so much that he was given a key to the family's house and had some drawers set aside for visits when he would stay over.

"It was just unbelievable that it could be true," said the boy's father, who now lives in California. "Myles White was a trusted friend of the family. We felt Catholic priests could do no wrong."

But this summer, White was arrested and charged with sexually molesting a 16-year-old boy from downstate Manteno while White was assigned to St. Martin of Tours Church in Kankakee.

After learning of those charges, the father changed his mind about the charges made by his son, who committed suicide in 1990 at the age of 35. The father now blames the sexual abuse as a key factor in his son's suicide, according to a lawsuit filed this week in Will County Circuit Court. The suit claims the abuse occurred when White was a priest at St. Isaac Jogues between 1968 and 1972.

The family, which was not named in the suit, is seeking more than \$15,000 in damages from White and several other defendants, including the Diocese of Joliet, its bishop, Joseph Imesch, and the National Conference of

Catholic Bishops.

The father said that recovering money damages was not the reason he filed the suit. Instead, he said, he wanted to raise public awareness about White's alleged activities and urged other potential abuse victims to step forward.

White, now 51, has been placed on administrative leave since his arrest July 28, said Sister Judith Davies, chancellor of the Joliet Diocese. Efforts to locate White Wednesday were unsuccessful. Davies would not comment on the lawsuit.

The father of the Hinsdale man said his son was severely depressed when he first made the allegations in 1989 and never offered details about when or where the alleged abuse took place. The father added, though, that his son divulged more to other family members.

"I sure wish I would have put more into what my son had said," the father said.

Police sought out White after they came across a videotape showing White and the Manteno boy having sex in 1991. At the time, White was a priest at the St. Martin of Tours Parish in Kankakee. The tape was turned over to authorities by a man who had bought it at a Lions Club flea market in Culver, Ind.

The man thought he was buying a videotape of the town's annual parade. But when he and his family sat down to watch it, only part of the tape contained coverage of the parade — a 30-minute span showed White having sex with the boy.

After finishing his training at a Denver seminary, White was assigned to several parishes, including St. Isaac Jogues from 1968-72, Sacred Heart Parish in Lombard from 1972-74, Notre Dame Parish in Clarendon Hills from 1974-78, St. Boniface Parish in University Park from 1978-88, and St. Martin from 1988 until August.